



CATAWBA COUNTY

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Public Health

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DENTAL HEALTH MONTH PROMOTES TURN IN YOUR TOOTHBRUSH DAY

February is Children's Dental Health Month. Dental decay is the number one leading disease among children and the most preventable. Tooth decay early in life can have serious implications for a child's long-term health and well-being.

An April 2007 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analyzed the dental health of Americans. A comparison of the time period of 1988-1994 and 1999-2002 showed a 15.2% increase in cavities among children between the ages of two and five. According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentists, a child's first dentist visit should be scheduled close to their first birthday.



Keelan Henrickson of East Newton Play School, recently traded in his old toothbrush for a new firefly light up toothbrush, with Lee Ann Ward, Dental Health Educator from Public Health.

To create awareness of the importance of dental health in young children, Turn in Your Toothbrush Day was introduced to childcare centers in Catawba County in 1998 during Children's Dental Health Month. The first year, fourteen centers participated.

Children in participating childcare centers receive dental health education and are encouraged to turn in their old toothbrushes and receive a new toothbrush as a replacement. Toothbrushes should be discarded and replaced about every 3 months to best prevent plaque buildup.

The Catawba County Partnership for Children, also known as Smart Start, supplies the new toothbrushes for children in Catawba County childcare centers participating in the Turn in Your Toothbrush Day. "We are very proud to be an annual sponsor Turn in Your Toothbrush Day," states Kim Salyards, Director of Catawba County Partnership for Children, "Teaching children to prevent dental disease is very important in achieving our mission to ensure all children are healthy and ready to learn."

"This year marks the tenth anniversary for Turn in Your Toothbrush Day," said Lee Ann Ward, Dental Health Educator at Catawba County Public Health, "Public Health's Early Childhood Support Team, Dental Staff, and Dental Health Education Program distributed over 2000 toothbrushes to 56 childcare centers, Mother's Morning Out and preschool programs participating. Over 963

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toothbrushes were turned in by children ages 0-5 throughout Catawba County. I am amazed at the momentum the program has gained through the years. This collaboration will ensure bright smiles and a healthier tomorrow for the children of Catawba County.”

Tooth Time dental educational kits and free dental screenings in childcare centers are available for children ages 0-5. Financial assistance for dental treatment is also available for low-income children who have dental decay.

This event is made possible through a partnership between Catawba County Public Health and funding from the Catawba County Partnership for Children. Please contact LeeAnn Ward, Dental Health Educator at 828-256-3167 for further information or visit <http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth/Dentalhealth.asp>.